

Evaluation of the Richmond City Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services Pilot Program: Executive Summary

To the Chairs of the Senate Finance and
House Appropriations Committees

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Criminal Justice Research Center

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**Evaluation of the Richmond City Continuum of
Juvenile Justice Services Pilot Program: Executive Summary**

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I. OVERVIEW

In 1994, the Virginia General Assembly provided funding to assist development of the Richmond City Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services. Although some community-based programs were in existence at that time, such as those operated through the 13th District Court Service Unit (CSU), these funds allowed the development of additional programs to form a comprehensive continuum of services for juveniles in the City of Richmond. The Continuum was designed to provide adjudicated youth in Richmond with a wide range of community-based programs and services, and to provide a series of graduated sanctions that increase in intensity as the number and severity of offenses increase. The program operates through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice and the Richmond City Department of Juvenile Justice Services.

In 1995, the General Assembly directed the Department of Criminal Justice Services to evaluate the Continuum, and subsequent legislative sessions continued the evaluation directive through the year 2000. Therefore, the conclusions presented in this report are based on an examination of approximately five years of Continuum operation. During this time, the Continuum has gone through continuous change, both in the numbers and types of programs it provides.

The evaluation strategy incorporated a number of activities to examine both Continuum processes/procedures and program outcomes. These activities included reviews of participants' Court and CSU records, program attendance and participation records, and supplementary criminal record data. In addition, evaluators conducted surveys of juvenile justice professionals, Continuum juveniles, and their parents or guardians.

It appears that the Continuum has had some positive effects on the Richmond City juvenile justice system, especially as rated by program participants and juvenile justice professionals involved with the programs. There also is evidence that participation in the Continuum may reduce the seriousness of subsequent charges. Furthermore, the Continuum has maintained juveniles in the community and reduced the number of Richmond youth being committed to the state juvenile justice system. However, some basic measures of program success, such as program graduation rates and recidivism after leaving the Continuum, indicated problem areas that require significant improvement. It also appears that in many instances programs are not operating as a series of escalating, graduated sanctions as intended. Finally, findings indicate that most Continuum programs use some treatment strategies that are known to be ineffective.

In light of these findings, evaluators recommend that the 2000 General Assembly continue funding for the Richmond Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services program during the 2000-2002 biennium, as indicated in the 2000 Budget Bill. During this time, RDJJS should develop an action plan to continue funding necessary programs beyond FY2002. In addition, evaluators have also identified several areas where program

administration and outcomes may be improved. Specific recommendations were developed to address:

- reviewing the program philosophy, goals and objectives;
- reviewing the program structure/placement hierarchy;
- refining the system to incorporate more effective strategies and possibly eliminate unnecessary programs;
- conducting a standardized needs assessment;
- refining existing programs to better address critical needs (education, substance abuse, psychological problems, family issues, and aftercare);
- improving program monitoring;
- improving data collection and information management;
- implementing a comprehensive data system;
- establishing a collaborative case review, supervision, and consultation system;
- improving communication methods;
- augmenting partnerships with community organizations; and
- developing internal strategies to continue ongoing evaluation.

A complete review of this project and its findings can be found in the full research report, *Evaluation of the Richmond City Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services Pilot Program: Final Report (2000)*. This report is available upon request from the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

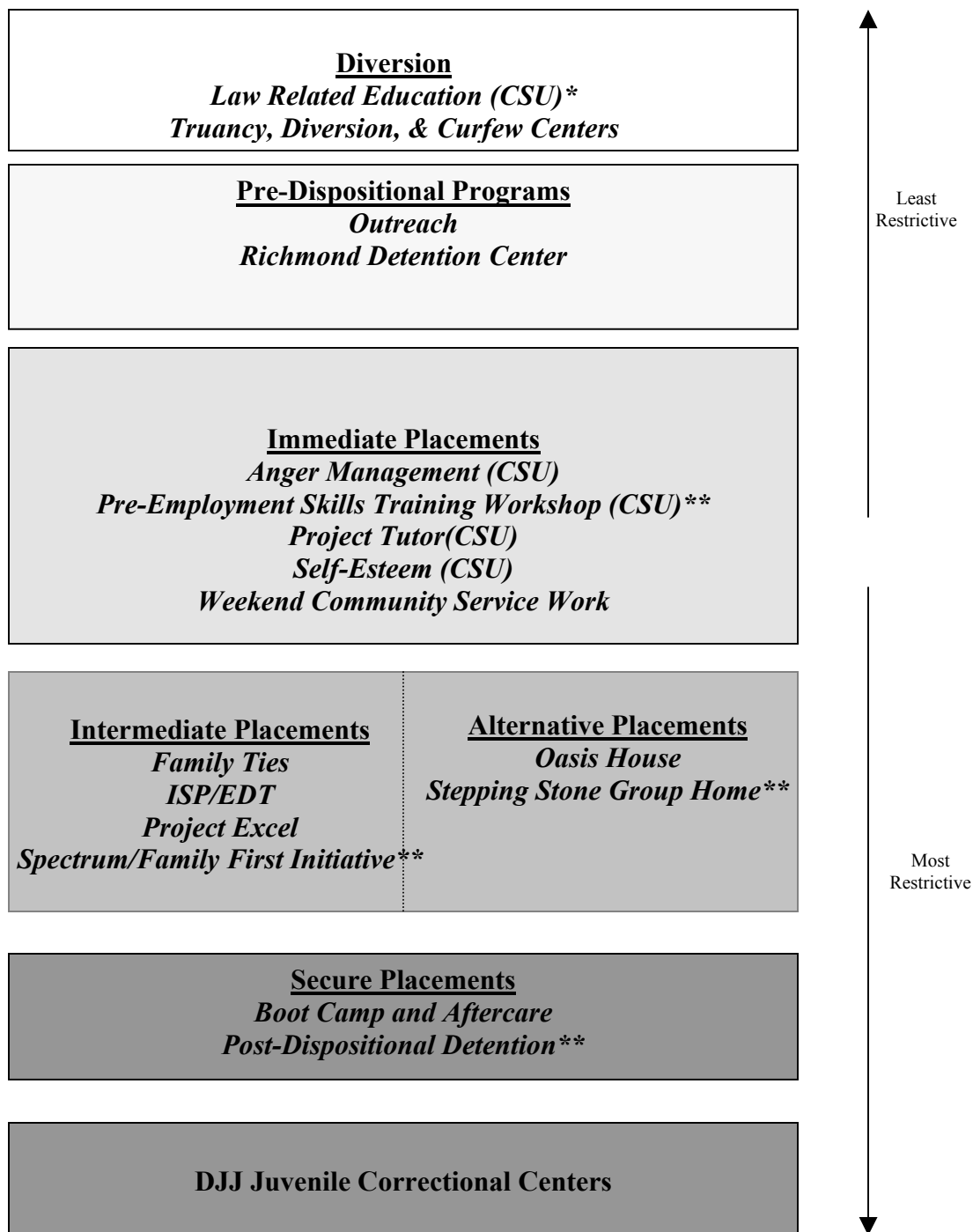
II. DESCRIPTION OF THE RICHMOND CONTINUUM OF JUVENILE JUSTICE SERVICES

In 1994, the Virginia General Assembly appropriated funds to the Virginia Department of Youth and Family Services (now known as the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice) to establish new community-based programs and services for adjudicated juveniles in the City of Richmond. The new programs and services augmented the existing system, creating a wider range of dispositional options called the Richmond City Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services. The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) entered into a formal Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Richmond to establish and fund the Continuum. While the Richmond Department of Juvenile Justice Services (RDJJS) administers and supervises the Continuum at the local level, a group of Stakeholders also advises and acts as a resource to the Continuum system.

RDJJS states that the mission of the Continuum is “to promote public safety, to reduce recidivism, and to prevent juvenile delinquency through a continuum of services that empowers all participants to achieve measurable success.” The Continuum is conceptualized as a graduated sanctions system, and contains an array of at least 14 sanctions and services which vary in intensity (see Figure 1). The majority of these programs are community-based and offer a range of services through cooperation, in part, with other state and city agencies. The Continuum is a very dynamic system, which changes continually in an attempt to meet the diverse needs of the juvenile population.

Figure 1
Overview of Richmond City Continuum Placement Hierarchy

Juveniles in the Continuum may be placed into any of the following programs:



*This program is also used as an Immediate Placement

III. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This document serves as the final report for an evaluation effort that has been ongoing since 1995. The evaluation methodology was designed to achieve several purposes:

- to provide updated descriptions of existing Continuum programs and preliminary reviews of new programs that developed during the evaluation effort,
- to describe the juveniles who are referred to Continuum programs,
- to review program participation and graduation rates,
- to examine characteristics of juveniles who successfully complete individual Continuum programs,
- to examine reoffense patterns for juveniles in the Continuum,
- to determine if the Continuum is operating as a graduated sanctions system,
- to collect feedback from offenders and their families about their experiences as Continuum participants,
- to assess professional reactions to specific Continuum programs and the Continuum system more generally, and
- to examine treatment services provided by Continuum programs.

The evaluation incorporated qualitative and quantitative data from a number of different sources. The primary areas of study, along with a brief description of data sources used for each topic, are provided below.

Program Assessments

Several data sources were used to provide descriptive information about Continuum programs and their clients. Data were also collected from multiple sources to assess program outcomes.

Background Interviews and Observations. Interviews were conducted with relevant Continuum Stakeholders to collect updated information on each program, and to guide development of the research methodology. Observations were also conducted of Richmond's Juvenile & Domestic Relations (J&DR) Court proceedings to gain a better understanding of court processing and file documentation.

Review of Court Files and Court Service Unit (CSU) Files. J&DR Court and CSU files were reviewed for a sample of 547 juveniles placed into a Continuum program between January 1995 and March 1998. Juvenile court files provided the most complete record of court activity (e.g., offense and dispositional history, recidivism following program placement), while CSU files provided the most complete social history information (e.g., demographics, family histories, substance abuse and psychological disorders).

Program Status and Service Utilization Data. Program status and service utilization data were obtained for a subset of the 547 juveniles discussed above, specifically juveniles who were sampled from program rosters between March 1997 and March 1998. This

information was used to determine whether juveniles were successfully or unsuccessfully discharged from each program and the length of time spent in each program.

Data from the Central Criminal Record Exchange (CCRE). Data were also obtained from the Virginia State Police to track offending for individuals in our sample who had turned 18 years of age. By using the CCRE database, evaluators could determine if any offenders had incurred criminal adult arrests or convictions after participating in the Richmond City Continuum.

Preliminary Program Evaluations. In addition to the programs reviewed through the file review activities discussed above, preliminary program evaluations were conducted for a small number of programs that opened somewhat later (Truancy, Curfew and Diversion Centers; Project Payback; and the Drug Treatment Court). These preliminary evaluations focused on the number of juveniles served, as well as the participation levels of juveniles enrolled in these programs.

Participant and Professional Feedback

Interviews and surveys were used to collect feedback on the Continuum system and the services provided by individual Continuum programs.

Surveys of Parents and Juveniles Involved in Continuum Programs. Juveniles and parents/guardians involved in Continuum programs were surveyed from September 1998 through June 1999 to determine: (1) how well juveniles and parents understood the requirements of the program, (2) whether there were changes in the juveniles' attitudes and behaviors after program participation, and (3) whether respondents would or would not recommend the program to other juveniles.

Surveys and Interviews of Juvenile Justice Professionals. Interviews with Richmond City J&DR Court judges and surveys of Richmond juvenile justice professionals (probation officers, managers and staff from Continuum programs, and juvenile attorneys) were conducted to obtain professional feedback about the Continuum system. Opinions were elicited about many aspects of the system, including the purpose of the Continuum, the services provided, and the effectiveness of individual programs. In addition, the Acting Director of RDJJS was interviewed to obtain information on progress towards Continuum goals and objectives.

Compatibility of Continuum with Existing Research Literature

In addition, researchers conducted a literature review of juvenile justice strategies that have been previously evaluated. These findings were used to develop a brief interview instrument, with the intent of obtaining a better understanding of the types of services received by juveniles who participated in the Continuum. Interviews were then conducted to gain a description of the therapeutic activities used by each program. These responses were compared to strategies previously shown by research to be effective or ineffective.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented below summarize an assessment of three broad aspects of the Continuum: (1) Continuum program services, (2) Continuum program outcomes, and (3) Continuum system outcomes.

Continuum Program Services

Three components of the program services offered by the Continuum were reviewed in this evaluation. First, program service utilization was assessed by examining attendance, enrollment, and program completion information for each Continuum program. Second, satisfaction levels of Continuum participants and juvenile justice professionals were assessed. Third, the treatment services offered by each program were evaluated.

Service Utilization. The Continuum offers more than a dozen different programs, which have been utilized by a large number of youths. However, graduation rates for many of these programs were very low. Findings indicated that:

- In one-third of the programs offered, less than 50% of enrolled juveniles successfully completed the program.
- In more than one-half of the programs offered, less than 60% of enrolled juveniles successfully completed the program. Most juveniles who were discharged unsuccessfully simply did not attend the programs as required.
- Programs with particularly low rates of successful discharges included Safe Haven (0%), ISP/EDT (12%), Project Tutor (19%), Boot Camp Aftercare (25%), and Stepping Stone Group Home (26%).

Satisfaction. Surveys of juveniles, parents, and juvenile justice professionals involved in the Continuum showed the following results:

- A majority of the parents and juveniles rated program services as *Good* or *Excellent*.
- Juvenile justice professionals rated the effectiveness of the programs in addressing the needs of Continuum juveniles as only moderately positive. In particular, Continuum programs were rated low on their ability to address the needs of juveniles living with distressed families and juveniles with mental health problems.

These findings suggest that opinions about Continuum services differ, but it is unclear why this discrepancy in program perceptions exists. One interpretation is that juveniles and parents genuinely feel more positively about the program than juvenile justice professionals, and are pleased with the services that are being provided to them. Professionals, on the other hand, may be aware that programs are using ineffective strategies in many instances (see *Treatment Services* below), and rate the programs more negatively for this reason. Another possibility is that juveniles and parents responded more positively because they feared that negative opinions might be communicated back to program staff or the court.

Treatment Services. Interviews with program managers regarding treatment services and strategies used by Continuum programs revealed the following:

- Most programs were consistently using at least one treatment strategy shown by research to be effective in reducing juvenile delinquency. Specifically, many of the programs reported that staff use both a “firm but fair approach” and “an interpersonally warm and flexible approach” on a routine basis.
- About two-thirds of the programs were also using at least one ineffective strategy on a consistent basis. Approaches that have been deemed ineffective by prior research, yet are commonly used in the Continuum, include affective education, peer group counseling, and morality appeals.

In sum, many of the juveniles who were supposed to participate in Continuum programs did not attend on a regular basis, and therefore did not receive the intended services. Both parents and juveniles rated the Continuum program services positively, but the juvenile justice professionals involved in the Continuum rated the programs as only moderately effective in dealing with the juveniles’ needs. The Continuum programs appear to be using a mixture of both effective and ineffective strategies in their treatment approaches. Therefore, even the juveniles who participated in the programs on a regular basis may not have received the maximum benefit from those services. Finally, the use of treatment strategies that have been demonstrated as ineffective obviously decreases the cost-effectiveness of service provision.

Continuum Program Outcomes

Program outcomes were examined through several different measures. First, evaluators assessed the ability of Continuum programs to meet their stated goals and objectives, such as changes in the juveniles’ educational, psychological, and vocational behaviors. Unfortunately, insufficient record keeping on juveniles in many Continuum programs resulted in a lack of objective information to assess these changes.

In lieu of more objective measures of change, juveniles, parents, and juvenile justice professionals were surveyed to obtain their impressions of how juveniles changed after Continuum participation. Findings indicated that:

- A majority of juveniles, parents, and juvenile justice professionals reported positive changes in juvenile behaviors after Continuum program involvement.
- Juveniles and parents reported positive changes in the areas of *Delinquency* and *Substance/Alcohol Use* more often than any other areas. Positive changes in *Educational Achievement*, on the other hand, were noted less frequently by parents and juveniles.
- The juvenile justice professionals reported positive changes most often in the areas of *Respect for Authority* and *Self-Esteem*. However, they reported positive changes least often in the area of *Substance/Alcohol Use*, which contradicts responses from parents and juveniles.

Overall, both Continuum participants and juvenile justice professionals report positive outcomes for the juveniles and families who receive Continuum services, however, the areas of positive change identified were not consistent across groups.

Finally, court records and criminal records provided recidivism information, which is perhaps the most important indicator of change for juveniles in the Richmond Continuum. Recidivism findings are summarized below:

- For most programs, the percentage of juveniles with a subsequent court contact following program placement exceeded 75%. In addition, the conviction rate for most programs was 70% or higher. Unfortunately, no control groups were available for comparison purposes, making it impossible to determine how many of these juveniles would have recidivated if they had not participated in a Continuum program.
- A comparison of the types of convictions before and after placement provided some support that the programs were having a positive impact. For a majority of Continuum programs, the seriousness of the juveniles' convictions decreased following program placement. One possibility is that decreases in the severity of subsequent offending may result from actual behavioral or attitudinal changes that occurred due to program involvement. Alternatively, less severe subsequent offending might be a by-product of the increased monitoring and surveillance that occurs in most of these programs. Consequently, new offenses may be identified and dealt with at an earlier point of intervention.

Continuum System Outcomes

The Continuum was designed to operate as a graduated sanctions system for Richmond juveniles. Therefore, evaluators attempted to determine if the Continuum was functioning as such by comparing initial placements to subsequent placements. Analyses revealed that the juveniles' placements often did not follow a graduated sanctions pattern. Specifically:

- A broad analysis of placement patterns showed that three-quarters of all juveniles with a subsequent Continuum placement eventually received a new placement that was more restrictive than the initial one.
- To examine placement decisions for the group of offenders that elicit the highest level of concern, a more detailed analysis was conducted on juveniles who incurred increasingly serious subsequent charges. This analysis showed that juveniles who incurred new charges that were more serious than prior charges received a more restrictive disposition as a consequence of the new charge in only about half of all cases.

In addition, responses from juvenile justice professionals revealed positive and negative aspects about the Continuum system. Findings indicated that:

- The appropriateness of Continuum program admission criteria was rated positively, as was the impact of the Continuum on job activities. Furthermore, all judges stated that they would recommend implementation of a similar graduated sanctions system in another locality. In particular, judges were very positive about the number of dispositional options available to them since the onset of the Continuum system.
- Communication among juvenile justice professionals appears to be weak regarding the availability and appropriateness of services for individual offenders, especially between the Continuum and attorneys. Also, there appears to be some confusion about the primary purpose of the Richmond Continuum among the juvenile justice professionals who work in the 13th District Court, which may have implications for the system's ability to effectively accomplish its goals.

Finally, the impact of the Richmond Continuum on state Juvenile Correctional Centers was examined. Between FY1995 and FY1999, the number of Richmond City youth committed to DJJ has decreased 35%. Therefore, it appears that the number of juveniles who are retained in the community has increased since the implementation of the Richmond Continuum. This reduction in the number of Richmond juveniles committed to DJJ should help to alleviate some of the overcrowding problems that currently exist in Virginia's state juvenile correctional facilities, which is one of the goals of the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA).

Summary

This evaluation has identified a number of problems associated with Continuum program services. For example, interview results indicated that most of the programs use strategies shown by research to be ineffective in dealing with juvenile offenders. In addition, high rates of recidivism have been documented for Continuum participants following program participation. However, positive outcomes have also been achieved in some areas. For a majority of Continuum programs, the seriousness of the juveniles' convictions decreased following program involvement. In addition, the number of Richmond juveniles who were committed to DJJ has decreased by 35% since implementation of the Continuum. This reduction in DJJ commitments should help to ease overcrowding in state juvenile correctional facilities. Although the Richmond Continuum appears to have had some positive impacts on both the local and state juvenile justice systems, these findings do identify several areas where significant improvements are necessary.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluators developed a number of new recommendations based on the data presented in this report. In addition, many of the recommendations that were suggested in the 1998 DCJS evaluation report were retained. Most recommendations that were carried over from the previous report have been partially addressed by Stakeholder subcommittees but require further attention. Any progress is reported in the following section, along with recommendations for additional action.

Administrative Recommendations

Funding

Consistent with the direction of the 2000 General Assembly, funding for the Richmond Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services program should continue during the 2000-2002 biennium. During this time, RDJJS should develop an action plan to continue funding necessary programs beyond FY2002.

The 2000 General Assembly approved funding of the Continuum for two additional years. In addition, VJCCCA monies are also used to fund Continuum programs. Because the pilot program has been supported with state funds for five years and has produced only mixed results, it now seems appropriate to transition the fiscal responsibility for this program back to the locality. Richmond currently receives full funding under VJCCCA, but these funds do not cover the cost of all programs that are currently supported with state funds. Both the Boot Camp and the ISP/EDT programs, which are two of the largest programs, are funded by the special budget bill appropriation rather than VJCCCA monies. Therefore, Richmond should develop an action plan to continue funding for necessary programs after FY2002. This plan should be guided by the needs assessment activities recommended in the *Planning and Refinement of the Continuum System* section below.

Programming Recommendations

Planning and Refinement of the Continuum System

Stakeholders, with guidance from the 13th District J&DR judges, should review the philosophy of the Continuum, as well as the goals and objectives, to determine whether changes are warranted.

When asked the purpose of the Continuum, only 26% of the juvenile justice professionals surveyed indicated that it was supposed to be a graduated sanctions system. Two-thirds indicated that it was designed to provide wrap-around services. In addition, analyses showed that the Continuum was not consistently working as a graduated sanctions system. In response to these findings, evaluators recommend that Stakeholders, with guidance from the judges, review the purpose of the Continuum to decide whether it should operate as a graduated sanctions system. Because judges have the most control over the dispositions imposed, this recommendation largely depends on their opinions. If the Stakeholders and judges decide that the Continuum should operate as a graduated sanctions system, the juvenile justice professionals who work in the Continuum should be trained on the philosophy of this approach. Stakeholders should also decide how wrap-around services fit into the graduated sanctions philosophy, and communicate this to all Richmond juvenile justice professionals. The original goals and objectives should also be reviewed to determine if revisions are needed. If the original goals and objectives are

retained, applicable measures should be implemented to assess progress. Likewise, any new or revised goals and objectives should also be measurable.

13th District J&DR judges should review the structure of the Continuum System, and share their conclusions with the Stakeholders.

If Stakeholders decide that the Continuum should operate as a graduated sanctions system, the judges should consider reviewing the programs that comprise the Continuum to determine if they should continue to be conceptualized in the placement hierarchy shown in Figure 1 (see page 3). Once the structure has been finalized, the judges should consider stricter adherence to the program criteria than has previously occurred. Of course, judicial discretion and other risk assessment tools, such as the instrument developed by DJJ, are important factors in placement decisions. However, it is likewise important that the system operate in a fairly consistent fashion and that all professionals work towards the same general goals. Refining the program structure and communicating this information to professionals will also help programs focus their services to the targeted populations.

RDJJS should hire a juvenile justice program consultant to guide refinement of the Continuum system by directing programs in the use of effective treatment strategies and possibly eliminating unnecessary programs.

Before adding any new programs to the Continuum, RDJJS should consider hiring a consultant to observe and provide feedback on each program that is currently in operation. The consultant should first review the programs, in conjunction with the information provided in the full evaluation report, to determine if any should be eliminated. For example, this might include programs that are observed to use primarily ineffective strategies. For most programs, however, revising the content of the curriculum to include more effective strategies is recommended. Training on effective strategies should be provided to all Continuum service providers, including volunteers, vendors, CSU staff, and RDJJS staff, to enhance their ability to treat the problems of Richmond juveniles.

In addition, other points should be taken into account when considering new programs. First, overall examination of the Continuum suggests that the large number of programs may be too unwieldy to effectively manage, administer and evaluate. Therefore, the Stakeholders should focus on a select number of good programs instead of constantly adding new ones. Second, there is a need to improve attendance in current programs. In general, juveniles do not attend programs with longer attendance requirements, such as ISP/EDT, Safe Haven, and Boot Camp Aftercare. Stakeholders need to consider incentives for attending as well as sanctions for not attending to improve overall program completion. Finally, a program utilization review should be conducted to determine whether some programs simply are not needed. For example, the Boot Camp, which operated at less than two-thirds of its total capacity, had the lowest utilization rate of all the state-funded programs during the last half of 1999.

RDJJS should conduct a standardized needs assessment to address gaps in services.

In addition, RDJJS should convene a comprehensive planning body to obtain a more accurate picture of juveniles' needs. A needs assessment was recommended in the previous report, but no progress has been made to date. To be effective, programs designed for juvenile offenders must target the risk factors commonly found to contribute to delinquent offending. The best way to determine the specific risk factors of the population to be served is to conduct a thorough needs assessment. Presently, RDJJS has plans to conduct a survey with Stakeholders to help determine programming needs, but there is an additional need to conduct a community-wide assessment. In addition to Continuum Stakeholders, the comprehensive planning body should include representatives from law enforcement, education, social services, and mental health, as well as parents and juveniles.

RDJJS and the 13th District CSU should refine existing programs and services to better address educational issues, substance abuse, psychological problems, family issues, and aftercare.

Evaluators reviewed social history and court history information for juveniles in the Continuum, as well as juvenile arrest data for Richmond City, to identify needs that should be targeted by the Continuum. Survey responses were also examined to determine which areas of need were most frequently cited by juvenile justice professionals. The following areas were identified from this review:

Educational issues. The first major area of concern is educational issues. Across all programs, the majority of juveniles tested below age-appropriate expectations and had repeated at least one grade in school. Truancy, school behavior problems, and suspension from school are also very typical among Continuum juveniles. In addition, even though program staff rated educational activities as one of the most common program activities, educational achievement was rated as the lowest area of improvement by parents and juveniles. Presently, the only program specifically designed to address educational achievement is Project Tutor. Although other programs offer educational components, they are very limited in intensity. Continuum programs should place greater emphasis on academic achievement by imposing serious sanctions for not attending school and/or not complying with school rules.

Substance Abuse. Another major risk factor to target is substance abuse. More than half of all juveniles used alcohol or drugs prior to their first Continuum placement. In addition, 9% of all petitioned offenses for juveniles in our sample were drug law violations, and Uniform Crime Report (UCR) arrest data indicates that nearly 10% of all juvenile arrests in Richmond were for drug law violations. When asked to indicate overall changes in Continuum juveniles, juvenile justice professionals rated the least amount of improvement in the area of substance abuse. Currently, the only Continuum program that deals specifically with substance abuse is the Drug Treatment Court, which serves a very limited number of offenders. One vendor, *Associated Educational Services (AES)*, has established a curriculum for a substance abuse program; however, there is inadequate funding to serve Richmond's juvenile offenders at this time. RDJJS should

consider funding for juveniles to participate in this program if they can provide documentation that they use strategies shown to be effective with juvenile offenders. Other programs do address substance use (e.g., Boot Camp), but only in a very limited fashion. Given the prevalence of this problem, programs should refine these components to improve and emphasize substance abuse services. In addition, better follow-through is needed to monitor juveniles who are ordered to participate in substance abuse services at contracted providers. Although no documentation was provided to evaluators from these external providers, informal discussions indicated that court-ordered juveniles generally have low attendance and completion rates.

Psychological Problems. By the time of their first Continuum placement, more than 40% of all juveniles have been formally diagnosed as having a psychological disorder or a related symptom. While these problems are very prevalent in this population, services are quite limited. Sufficient mental health services should be made available to Continuum juveniles. The Continuum has already begun addressing this issue by planning a day treatment program for juvenile offenders with mental health issues at Richmond Behavioral Health Authority. In addition, more mental health services are now being offered at the detention center. However, as with substance abuse services that are offered through contracted providers, better follow-through is needed to monitor juveniles who are ordered to participate in mental health counseling to ensure that services are actually received.

Family Issues. When asked which areas of improvement cited by the previous report still need further work, juvenile justice professionals provided many suggestions for improvement in the area of family issues. However, only about one-third of all Continuum programs have a required parental component. Upon further review, even these requirements are minimal. In addition, evaluators observed low levels of parental participation when administering surveys. Also, programs with voluntary parental components report participation levels close to zero. To address family involvement problems, juvenile justice professionals suggested more residential programs, mandatory/court-ordered parental involvement, and additional family services. While RDJJS began offering a series of parenting education classes in January 2000, referrals and participation have been low, with a utilization rate of about 50%. In addition, a respite program for parents will soon be available to assist parents who need a break from juveniles in order to prevent conflict situations from escalating out of control. It is unclear, however, whether this program will offer services to parents, other than supervision of the youth who are brought to the facility. Finally, it should be noted that judges did not appear to be aware of parental noncompliance. They reported it was usually unnecessary to sanction parents because it is rarely reported to the court that parents are uncooperative. However, survey responses from program staff and probation officers indicated that lack of parental cooperation is a significant problem. Therefore, evaluators recommend that programs be more aggressive in reporting parental problems to the probation officers and judges so that they can apply sanctions when needed. Ideally, this information should be communicated to the court in a systematic fashion, perhaps through program reporting forms.

Aftercare. Of all the areas of improvement listed from the previous report, juvenile justice professionals commented on aftercare more frequently than almost any other area. Boot Camp Aftercare, in particular, appears to be a program with many problems. Only about 25% of all juveniles in this program are successfully discharged. Plans are currently being made to revise the content of that program. In addition, an aftercare component has been added to the Outreach program. Some programs claim to include “aftercare” services, but these activities are not consistent with traditional aftercare program models. For instance, aftercare for Project Excel and ISP/EDT includes monitoring activities to determine whether juveniles have incurred new charges, but no actual services are provided.

Monitoring and Reporting on Continuum Performance

RDJJS and the 13th District CSU should address the need to improve program monitoring to ensure program compliance and quality.

In response to this recommendation from the previous report, a quality control monitor was appointed by RDJJS to ensure that all programs under the purview of that office are in compliance with program contracts and other departmental policies. The quality control monitor currently visits each program twice per month. During these visits, the monitor talks to juveniles, who are selected at random, to determine if they have any complaints. In addition, files are randomly selected for review to ensure that documentation in the case notes is current. While compliance with grant and contract documentation is an important role for the quality control monitor, program monitoring should address other issues as well. Program monitoring should be improved to address other critical program elements, such as: (1) Are programs being implemented with fidelity to the program model? (2) Are programs spending the intended amount of time providing services or conducting the intended number of sessions? and (3) Are programs using effective strategies to provide services? The CSU should likewise appoint a quality control monitor for the volunteer programs to ensure that these programs are also providing adequate documentation and high quality services.

RDJJS, DJJ, and the 13th District CSU should address the need for improved data collection and information management, both at the system and program level.

RDJJS programs are now collecting information on a number of program status variables, including the number of juveniles served each month, the number of juveniles successfully and unsuccessfully discharged from each program, and reasons for unsuccessful discharges. However, program outcomes are largely unavailable from most Continuum programs. The RDJJS programs should continue to work with an independent consultant to refine data collection of the program status variables. For some programs, the number of juveniles served and the discharge status of participating juveniles were still not being collected in a consistent manner. Once documentation of the program status variables has been consistently implemented across all programs, program outcome measures should also be developed. In addition, the CSU programs should use the same documentation strategies as the RDJJS programs to keep track of the juveniles participating in the volunteer programs. Finally, evaluation training for all

Continuum programs might be useful to inform program directors and staff about the importance and value of adequate evaluation data.

RDJJS, DJJ, and the 13th District CSU should develop and implement a comprehensive data system that can be accessed by program managers, program staff, probation officers, and judges.

This recommendation has not been addressed from the previous report, reportedly due to a lack of funding. Because communication is still an issue for the Continuum, this recommendation remains important to address. A comprehensive data system would allow each program easy access to information on Continuum juveniles, including prior services received, program compliance, and offense history. Although the proposed service plan (see *Service Planning, Case Management, and Review System* below) will provide some of this information, keeping track of a paper copy of each plan with updated information could be difficult for all staff involved. In addition, the service plan is not likely to contain some pertinent information, such as offense history and prior services received. The Acting Director of RDJJS reports that both the City of Richmond and DJJ have begun to develop data systems that may be useful for this purpose. However, it is unclear what those systems will entail. If the proposed systems do not prove to be useful options for the Richmond Continuum, RDJJS should consider creating their own system once funding for a data system becomes available. This system could be implemented at the new Southside Intake Assessment Center, which is designed to be a central intake facility for all Richmond juveniles charged with an offense. The assessment center is scheduled to open in July 2000.

Service Planning, Case Management, and Review System

The 13th District CSU and RDJJS should collaborate to develop a case review, supervision, and consultation system that includes CSU staff and Continuum program staff in jointly reviewing service plans of individual cases.

Under the new collaborative review system that has been proposed by a subcommittee of Stakeholders, the probation officer assigned to the case would initiate the service plan. However, this form will follow a juvenile through each subsequent Continuum placement as well. Program staff will then add to the initial service plan, rather than re-create a new one each time a juvenile receives a new program placement. The probation officers will continue to have input into the plan, and will serve as the central point of contact. The goal of this new system is to facilitate information sharing and avoid service duplication. Evaluators have two recommendations concerning the current case review plan. First, both volunteer and paid facilitators from the CSU programs should be included in this case review system. These individuals should provide feedback on participating juveniles to determine whether progress has been made in the areas targeted by their programs. Juveniles are sometimes placed in RDJJS and CSU programs simultaneously, thus CSU involvement in the service plan seems necessary to avoid duplication of services. Second, the service plan should be reviewed by the evaluation consultant to determine if some of the documented information could serve as outcome measures for the Continuum programs.

Communication

RDJJS, the 13th District J&DR Court, and the 13th District CSU should continue to develop and implement methods to improve communication within the Continuum system.

In response to this recommendation in the last report, Stakeholders created a manual containing information on admission criteria and program capacity for all Continuum programs. Despite the implementation of the Continuum program manual, a number of problems related to communication continue to need attention. When asked to indicate which problems reported in the last evaluation still needed improvement, suggestions related to communication were offered most frequently by all juvenile justice professionals. The biggest communication gap, however, was between the Continuum and juvenile attorneys. Only 38% of the juvenile attorneys indicated that they were made aware of program changes, and, on average, less than half of the attorneys were aware of each program's content and admission criteria.

To remedy some of these communication problems, evaluators recommend that RDJJS develop a website that includes a copy of the Continuum manual. In addition, CSU programs should be included in the Continuum manual to ensure that Stakeholders are aware of information related to these programs. A hard copy of this manual, with information about the website, should be distributed to all juvenile justice professionals who work in the Richmond J&DR Court, as well as all new employees who interact with Continuum programs. In addition, a Stakeholder representative should make a presentation on the Continuum programs to the juvenile attorneys to ensure that they understand which programs are appropriate for the juveniles they are prosecuting or defending. Finally, all juvenile justice professionals, especially the judges, should strongly consider observing program activities.

Community-Based Services

RDJJS and Stakeholders should augment partnerships with community organizations and members of the community through existing mechanisms for City involvement.

In response to this recommendation in the previous report, RDJJS has made several presentations to civic organizations in Richmond to increase awareness of the services available to "at-risk" juveniles. In addition, RDJJS has collaborated with several other Richmond City agencies to provide juveniles with needed services. To further these efforts, RDJJS should continue to meet with local civic organizations to provide citizens with information about the juvenile justice services available in Richmond, especially diversion programs. They should also continue to coordinate efforts with local agencies when appropriate. In addition, evaluators recommend that several parents from high-crime communities, who do not work in the juvenile justice field, be included in the Richmond Continuum Stakeholders group. These individuals could offer a new perspective on the types of problems that are relevant to the juveniles growing up in the City of Richmond. In addition, the citizens could help to identify gaps in existing services.

Evaluation

RDJJS and the Continuum Stakeholders should continue to evaluate the Richmond Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services.

RDJJS and the Continuum Stakeholders should develop internal strategies to pursue ongoing evaluation of the Continuum system. As examples, ongoing evaluation could review program utilization issues and assess the use of effective strategies within Continuum programs. RDJJS should continue to work with an evaluation consultant to correct data deficiencies and implement the recommendations from this report. In addition, RDJJS should consider conducting a cost-effectiveness evaluation. Although the reduction in DJJ commitments suggests reduced costs occur under this system, evaluators were unable to examine this issue in greater detail. Examples of questions that could be answered in such an evaluation include: (1) How much money, if any, do programs spend on juveniles who are enrolled in a program but do not attend? (2) What are the practical costs associated with programs that operate below capacity? (3) What costs are associated with the use of ineffective treatment strategies? and (4) Does the cost per juvenile decrease when juveniles are served in the community, rather than at DJJ Correctional Centers?

Summary

The Richmond Continuum of Juvenile Justice Services, which was intended to be a pilot program, has been supported with state funds since 1994 and has produced only mixed results. Therefore, evaluators recommend that the fiscal responsibility for this program be transitioned back to the City of Richmond. Based on information from over five years of Continuum operation, RDJJS should refine the system to maximize available funds. A number of recommendations were made to further this effort, including a review of program philosophy and structure, a comprehensive needs assessment, and modification of existing programs so that they incorporate more effective treatment strategies. In addition, evaluators recommend possible elimination of certain programs that have low utilization rates, that have not shown positive results, or that are found to be using primarily ineffective treatment strategies. Evaluators also recommend that changes in the system be coupled with improved monitoring and reporting on Continuum performance. For example, programs should be monitored routinely for quality control purposes. In addition, data should be collected to assess service provision and program effectiveness. The development of a comprehensive data system was also recommended to improve access to juvenile information and enhance communication among juvenile justice professionals. Other recommendations include the need for a more collaborative service planning process, improved communication within the Continuum system, and enhancing partnerships with community organizations. A final recommendation stresses the importance of continual evaluation of the Continuum system to improve overall effectiveness.